

TWINNING IN ACTION

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"Twinning must continue to be the cornerstone of the Union's and the candidate countries' joint effort to foster Institution building. The regular reports on the progress achieved in 2000 by the candidate countries illustrate that building adequate administrative capacity remains the greatest challenge on the road to accession. With its targeted programming and design, twinning leads to result-oriented projects to meet agreed priority needs, and the Commission offers a unique instrument to pool the expertise of Member States' administrations for the benefit of the candidate countries. I also believe that twinning provides a unique learning experience and exposure for both sides, which will greatly contribute to the successful completion of the enlargement process."

Günter Verheugen, Member of the European Commission

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INTRODUCTION

The accession to the European Union of the candidate countries¹ requires the strengthening of their institutional and administrative capacity. These countries must establish a modern, efficient administration that is capable of applying the *acquis communautaire* to the same standards as the current Member States.

In Agenda 2000 the European Commission proposed to re-focus the Phare² Programme on two priorities to help candidate countries adopt the *acquis*:

- institution building
- investment.

Institution building helps them to reinforce their institutional and administrative capacity to the point where they are ready to take on the obligations of membership and to get the most out of joining the EU. Institution building means developing the structures and systems, human resources and management skills needed to implement the *acquis*.

Together, the European Commission and the EU Member States have mobilised significant human and financial resources to help the candidate countries meet the challenge of strengthening their administrative capacity. In the EU, the *acquis* is implemented by Member States' national administrations (at central, regional and local level), and by agencies, professional bodies, and the private sector. This vast body of administrative and technical expertise is now being made available to the candidate countries through a process of twinning.

After having focused mainly on four key areas of the *acquis* in each candidate country (agriculture, environment, finance and justice and home affairs), Twinning now covers the whole of the *acquis* in its wider sense.

What is it?

Twinning projects involve the **secondment of EU experts**, known as Pre-Accession Advisors, to the candidate countries. They are made available for a period of, at least, one year to work on a project in the corresponding Ministry in a candidate country. Pre-Accession Advisors are supported by a senior project leader in their home administration, who is responsible for ensuring the overall thrust of the project implementation and coordinating all other inputs from the Member State. In order to achieve the objective of the twinning project, it is necessary to combine different means, including short-term expertise, training, services (such as translation and interpreting) and specialised help (such as specialised computer software), in addition to the Pre-Accession Advisor.

Twinning operates on the basis of specific projects. It frequently happens that Pre-Accession Advisors from several Member States work on different projects in the same Ministry in the

¹ Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia. Turkey is also a candidate country, but has not yet started negotiations

² The Phare programme covers the 10 candidate countries of central and eastern Europe, Cyprus and Malta have their own financing instruments, which became operational in 2000.

candidate countries. Twinning not only provides technical and administrative assistance to the candidate countries. It also helps to build long-term relationships between existing and future Member States and brings the candidate countries into wider contact with the diversity of practice inside the EU. According to the need for training, twinning can also include traineeships for candidate country officials with administrations, schools and professional bodies in the Member States.

What does it achieve?

The main feature of a twinning project is the fact that it sets out to deliver **specific and guaranteed results**. It is not designed to foster general cooperation but to deliver specific results, agreed between the parties in advance, for the implementation of priority areas of the acquis, as set out in the Accession Partnerships. The Partnerships are an instrument of the pre-accession strategy to identify short and medium-term priorities for each candidate country. These priorities result from the analysis by the Commission in the annual Regular Reports on the progress achieved by the candidate countries towards accession.

The fact that twinning is focused on the acquis, generally makes it possible to identify specific targets and to deliver the means to achieve them. For example, the object of a twinning might be to help a candidate country implement value-added tax (VAT) or to have its veterinary or border control service function to the same standards as those in the Member States. The Twinning Covenant commits the Member State(s) and candidate country beneficiary to jointly achieve the agreed result. It is in the hands of the candidate country to ensure that the right pre-conditions for success are met (e.g. introduce or change legislation, train and equip staff, set up appropriately staffed and trained monitoring or implementing agencies, etc). Both parties agree on a detailed work plan setting out their respective responsibilities for each step and the means to achieve it.

How do twins find each other?

A network of National Contact Points has been established to work with the Commission in the twinning process. Each Member State and each candidate country has appointed a person to represent them, to liaise with their own administration and to ensure the flow of information through the network.

The first step in every twinning project is the assessment by the candidate country of its needs focusing in particular on the priority areas for action set out in the Accession Partnership for each candidate country and in the corresponding National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis. This “needs assessment” forms part of the annual programming exercise which the Commission carries out with each candidate country and which is designed to match the priorities for action identified by the EU with the financial assistance available from the EU.

Member States are invited to propose ways of meeting the needs identified in projects included in the annual Commission funding allocation.

Offers of assistance are sent to the candidate countries and after discussion between all the parties the candidate country chooses the offer which best corresponds to its needs. In some cases, two, exceptionally three, Member States may join forces to provide assistance or the candidate country may invite Member States offering different elements to combine them in a single project. The “twins” then elaborate a detailed work programme in a covenant and submit it to the Commission for its final approval.

The project is monitored and assessed by the Commission (including through its Delegations in each candidate country) throughout its duration. It is possible to change the focus of the

initial proposals in the light of experience, provided this is agreed in advance with the Commission.

What are the contractual agreements?

Twinning projects are financed out of each candidate country's national envelope within the relevant financing instrument, which provides funding from the European Community budget to help the candidate countries to prepare for EU membership. Twinning operates on the basis of two documents:

- a Framework Agreement between the Commission and each Member State. This agreement sets out the terms and conditions (salaries and expenses) under which Member States make Pre-Accession Advisors and other staff available to the candidate countries. Pre-Accession Advisors continue to receive their salaries from their own administrations, which are reimbursed from the project funds. Each Pre-Accession Advisor receives payment for all costs associated with the secondment (e.g. subsistence allowance, housing, health insurance, travel costs etc).
- a twinning covenant between the candidate country and the Member State which sets out the result to be delivered by the project, the benchmarks by which its implementation can be monitored, the responsibilities of each party, the means to be used to achieve the agreed result and a detailed budget. In cases where more than one Member State is involved, a single one acts as project leader and signs the twinning covenant on behalf of the others.

TWINNING IN ACTION

Is Twinning working in practice? Even if the initiative is less than three years old, it is nonetheless useful to measure its success so far. The following analysis is based on first-hand research into some twenty concrete projects. It draws on the collective experience of Twinning partners, European Commission's DG Enlargement and its Delegations in candidate countries. It also takes account of an independent assessment of Twinning that was delivered in July 2000.

[photo]

Working in the environment

“The Communist regime was determined to provide economic and industrial development whatever the consequences. The price we had to pay – and are still paying – was environmental damage”. This assessment made by a Czech environmental expert reflects a far-reaching problem in the candidate countries.

While the candidate countries of central and eastern Europe have a number of environmental challenges in common, national and regional diversity is as rich as ever. Countries that range from the Baltic to the Black Sea are experiencing a variety of environmental and administrative problems that are rooted in the Communist era. One of Twinning’s biggest challenges is to find the flexibility to solve such a diverse set of problems.

Klaus Gabriel is on secondment from the Bavarian State Ministry for Regional Development and Environmental Affairs. Mr Gabriel is the Pre-Accession Adviser (PAA) with a Czech-German Twinning partnership helping the **Czech Environmental Inspectorate** strengthen its institutional and regulatory capacity. The project will last almost two years. Its objective is to raise the Inspectorate’s awareness and understanding of EU technical standards and the acquis environmental provisions. Mr Gabriel explains that the project “reaches out to around 300 people directly, either through training or direct on-site experience here or in Germany - and an even greater number by association. This stores up a great benefit for the future.” The project activities range from seminars, workshops, study visits and training courses to handbooks, guidelines and exercises/simulation games.

The Twinning has also provided a stimulus to environmental cooperation between the two countries. According to Mr Gabriel, Twinning makes a very human contribution to European integration. “New laws are only part of the process,” he says. “It is equally important to equip the people on the ground that will implement and enforce those laws.”

Environmental Twinning is of course taking place in other candidate countries. The solutions are as diverse as the problems. In **Hungary**, for example, the Ministry of the Environment chose Finland and Spain as its partners in implementing European legislation on Birds, Habitats and ‘Natura 2000’. Hungary wanted to benefit from the diversity of geography and experience that the Finns and the Spanish had to offer. The project, which started in the summer of 2000, comprises four main elements: planning, training, execution and information distribution, including an awareness programme to prepare the public for Natura 2000.

Besides their different professional backgrounds, PAAs Carlos Villalba from the Spanish Nature Conservation Agency and Outi Airaksinen from the Finnish Environment Institute also have very different experience of preparing for Natura 2000 – an important asset to which the Twinning Covenant specifically refers. As Mr Villalba says, “We have lived through the experience and know what mistakes we made. Of course we can’t tell how things will turn out here; even our Hungarian colleagues can’t predict the problems ahead. But with our collective experience we can give them the best preparation.” Ms. Airaksinen stresses that “nature is a vital element of society that needs protection. The EU will help with funding, but only if the Hungarians themselves show a serious commitment to the process.”

As the following tables illustrate, similar Twinning projects are under way in other candidate countries. These tables are not exhaustive but simply provide an overview of the diversity of projects in action.

Environmental protection projects

Candidate country	Project title	Member States
Bulgaria	Policy advice to develop overall strategy of the Ministry and updating of National Action Plan.	Germany, Austria, France
Lithuania	Strengthening Environmental Monitoring Capacities	Germany, Sweden, Denmark
Poland	Strengthening public administration, including Inspectorates for Environmental Protection.	Netherlands, UK
Romania	Development of an environmental approximation strategy with particular reference to the financial mechanism	France
Slovak Republic	Strengthening of the environmental inspectorates	Denmark,
Slovenia	Support to development and implementation of policy, information and training systems, sector legislation and sustainable financing mechanisms	Austria, Germany, France

Water projects

Candidate country	Project title	Member States
Estonia	Implementation of environmental accession programme	Sweden, France
Latvia	Strengthening of institutional capacity	Sweden
Poland	Implementation of environmental legislation and strategies	France, Germany, UK
Romania	Support on basin-related water management	France
Slovak Republic	Legal advice on the approximation of legislation	Netherlands

Air projects

Candidate country	Project title	Member States
Bulgaria	Support for the management of air quality at local level	Germany
Czech Republic	Institutions for monitoring air quality	Germany
Estonia	Implementation of environmental accession programme	Finland, Germany
Hungary	Air quality network	Germany, Austria
Poland	Air quality assessment systems	Germany
Slovak Republic	Strengthening of institutions (air)	Austria

Justice and Home Affairs

Justice and Home Affairs has become one of the most important aspects of enlargement. The number of Twinning projects in this field reflects the candidate countries' determination to reinforce their law and order machinery.

Jérôme Baconin is a PAA on secondment from the French Ministry of Justice to its counterpart in **Poland**. Mr Baconin is coordinating a three-year Twinning project, which also involves the Justice Ministries of the Netherlands, Germany (Federal government) and the German Region (Land) of Saxony.

The aim is to improve the efficiency of the court system and the public prosecutor's office. The Twinning has a number of tools at its disposal. Not only does it provide expertise to improve Ministry structures and establish small-claims courts. It also offers training for judges and state prosecutors, as well as expert advice on the prison system.

As Mr Baconin explains, a Twinning partnership is more focused than technical assistance. It must achieve clearly defined results. "This requires good preparation," he says. "Good preparation in turn demands real commitment from both partners." Mr Baconin also emphasizes the importance of guidance and quality control provided by the European Commission and its Delegations at this stage of the process.

Mr Baconin's knowledge of the country and the language has helped him become part of a team. Managing work across a wide range of areas, he has built contacts at all levels of government. In this way, a Twinning partnership is as rewarding for the PAA as it is for the partner organization. "The basic idea of Twinning is excellent", Mr Baconin concludes, "but it is important that the role is understood. It is the candidate country that must implement its reforms, while the PAA is there to assist with the help of the partner Member States."

In other candidate countries, including **Latvia**, **Lithuania** and **Slovenia**, Twinning has also focused on the difficult question of border controls. In fact, this accounts for a large proportion of all Justice and Home Affairs Twinning projects. Old borders have to be re-established; new borders have had to be created.

In **Lithuania**, for example, PAA Hanno Lavia, a Finnish Frontier Guard, spearheaded a 12-month partnership with the Lithuanian Border Police. The project had three principal objectives: to make a detailed analysis of the current border guarding situation in Lithuania; to implement expert cooperation and training programmes about planning and follow-up of activities and; to advise on changes in legislation.

Hanno Lavia's counterparts say that his project has produced concrete results for the Lithuanian Border Police. It has enabled them to assess their work according to efficiency, productivity, cost-effectiveness and net result. Specifically, it has facilitated new border guarding legislation and given them thorough training, in 24 sessions of varying length and specialisation in Finland and Lithuania. Mr Lavia underlines that the Lithuanians showed great commitment, took full advantage of the project and are already making use in their daily work of the skills, knowledge and information learnt during the training.

Similar Twinning projects in this sector are under way in other candidate countries, as these (non-exhaustive) tables show.

Border control and Schengen projects

Candidate country	Project title	Member States
Bulgaria	Strengthening of border police	Germany
Czech Republic	Preparation of Schengen implementation	Germany, Netherlands
Hungary	Border management	France, Germany, Austria
Romania	Border management and control, asylum and migration	Germany, Denmark
Slovak Republic	Border management and EU-Schengen acquis	France, Austria

Judiciary and court system projects

Candidate country	Project title	Member States
Bulgaria	Strengthening the independence of judiciary and capacity of Ministry of Justice in acquis	Greece, Germany
Czech Republic	Strengthening the independence and functioning of the judiciary	Netherlands
Estonia	Strengthening of the court system	Germany
Hungary	Training of law enforcement bodies	Germany, Austria, France, Spain
Romania	Approximation of legislation, implementation (inc. Court system reform, judiciary, organised crime)	France, Germany, Greece, Italy
Slovak Republic	Modernisation of courts	Austria, Germany

Preparation for EU funding

If future Member States are to enjoy the full benefit of EU membership – including the Structural and Cohesion Funds – then they clearly need to implement the relevant parts of the *acquis*. This is the thinking behind the Special Preparatory Programme.

Martin Põder, former Vice-Chancellor at the Ministry of Finance in **Estonia**, points out that the complexity of the Special Preparatory Programme can place a heavy burden on a small country. The Programme requires the coordination of eight Ministries in a small administrative structure. To accommodate such complexity, the Estonian-Irish Covenant for this Twinning has constantly adapted to changing circumstances.

Gerry Ennis of the Irish Department of Finance is the PAA for the project, which will last 18 months. The project comprises five main components: sound financial management and control; preparation for SAPARD³; preparation for ISPA⁴; provision of a National Development Plan and Administrative Framework; and legal framework assistance.

Estonia has to adapt fast to achieve the norms of EU performance with a small and young administration. Mr Ennis recognizes that “Ireland, like Estonia, was a small country with a small administration. However, while Ireland was able to prepare for membership gradually over the years, these candidates are being asked to take on everything within a short time period.” That experience makes Ireland an interesting partner for Estonia.

Martin Põder appreciates this aspect of Twinning. In his view, it provides “access to Member State expertise, which builds on a relationship that lasts through and beyond” in an area where outside help would otherwise be hard to find. The flexibility characterizing the design and implementation of the project is critical to its outcome.

In a similar project, the Scottish Executive leads a 20-month joint Twinning with the French DATAR (Délégation à l'Aménagement du Territoire et à l'action régionale) and Shannon Development of Ireland in the **Czech Republic**. Among its objectives, this Twinning aims to strengthen the capacity of the Czech business sector to participate in Structural Fund activities.

The project is designed to enable the Czech Republic to make effective use of the Structural and Cohesion Funds from the date of accession by helping the Czech authorities to create the mechanisms required to operate and implement them. There is great emphasis on financial control and relevant procedures, given their importance in administering the Funds. The Twinning also aims to provide technical assistance and support to increase the Czech business sector's capacity to participate in Structural Fund activities. In summary, the main elements of the project are provision of strategy and institution-building support and know-how at both national and regional levels; capacity-building for the industrial sector; and activities to help introduce ISPA and SAPARD.

³ Special Preparatory Programme for Agriculture and Rural development

⁴ Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession

Similar projects in other candidate countries are shown here:

Candidate country	Project title	Member States
Bulgaria	Develop regional and structural policy strategies	Spain
Hungary	Framework for regional development	France, Austria, Spain, Finland, UK
Latvia	Preparation for Structural Funds	Finland
Lithuania	Preparation for Structural Funds	Finland, Germany
Poland	Preparation for structural funds	UK, Germany, France, Finland, Ireland, Denmark
Romania	Development of a training capacity for regional development	UK, Greece
Slovak Republic	Preparation for Structural Funds	France, Austria, Germany, Ireland
Slovenia	Structural policy	Ireland, Germany, UK

Best practice in public finance

For the candidate countries, many aspects of European integration are not only a question of preparing for EU membership. They are at the same time a necessary step towards a secure place in the global economy. Public finance illustrates this point. Best practices in auditing, tax collection and customs are essential to enable economies to compete in the 21st century. The Twinning instrument gives the candidates access to a resource of public finance experts from a number of highly developed public finance institutions.

In Budapest the United Kingdom's National Audit Office leads a Twinning with the State Audit Office of **Hungary**. The Bavarian Court of Auditors and Danish National Audit Office are also involved. The project, with Bill Burnett as PAA, will last for 24 months. The objective is to enhance the systems of financial control in Hungary to the standards expected of the Member States of the European Union. The strategy for achieving this is to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Hungarian State Audit Office.

In terms of Covenant objectives, the project has undertaken needs analysis; prepared legislation amending the role of the State Audit Office and reforming the financial control system; and provided Concept Papers on other questions of financial legislation.

Mr Burnett considers that the commitment of all partners was a major factor in making the project work. The project had been well prepared, on the basis of good existing relationships between the Audit Offices and the personalities involved. These relationships have deepened and prospered as a result of the Twinning. The tool depends on "good planning and good relationships between individuals". The project has also benefited from the fact that they have had excellent support from senior management in both Member State and Hungarian partners. That, he believes, is essential.

In similar projects, PAA Carlos Sanz Mulas from the Spanish State Tax Administration Agency is helping the **Romanian** Ministry of Finance to strengthen its capacity to implement and manage new legislation on personal Income Tax.

Meanwhile, in **Bulgaria**, Klaus Schierenbeck, a German Customs agent, is on secondment to the Ministry of Finance Customs Administration as PAA in a Bulgarian-German Twinning. The project will last a year. The purpose is to bring Bulgarian Customs legislation, including a new Customs Act, into line with the acquis. In practice, the focus of the project is on third-level legislation – operating instructions and abstractions to enable customs officers to bring into force the new Customs law and its implementing regulations. The project combines consultancy and technical assistance input on the ground with study visits to Germany and France, workshops, seminars and other training activities in Bulgaria. In all, the project envisages around 85 separate activities. Mr Schierenbeck sees his role as providing practical knowledge about implementation. *"The Bulgarians know a lot about theory. What they need from me is an illustration of 'what happens in this case?' I'm here to fill in the gap between theory and practice."*

The following tables, which are not exhaustive, show the range of other similar projects in three areas of public finance, namely custom, taxation and public expenditure.

Customs

Candidate country	Project title	Member States
Estonia	Strengthening of Ministry of Finance (integrated information system, harmonisation and enforcement of legislation – competition, taxation, customs)	France, Germany
Latvia	Strengthening the tax and customs administration: Improvement of the State Revenue Service	Sweden, Belgium
Lithuania	Border police and customs administration, training	Finland
Poland	Transformation of the environment of the Polish Customs Administration in preparation for adoption of the acquis	UK, Germany, France, Netherlands
Slovak Republic	Comprehensive Border Strategy (customs administration)	Italy

Taxation

Candidate country	Project title	Member States
Czech Republic	Indirect taxation	UK, Germany
Lithuania	Budgetary process, indirect taxation, national audit/control bodies	Denmark
Poland	Tax administration	UK, Sweden
Slovak Republic	Legal advice (banking, insurance, stock exchange; taxation, state aids)	Germany, UK

Public expenditure

Candidate country	Project title	Member States
Lithuania	Budgetary process, indirect taxation, national audit/control bodies	Denmark
Romania	Capital markets supervision and monitoring of competition rules, Institutional development programme for the National Bank of Romania	France, Netherlands, Italy
Poland	National Bank of Poland	France, Italy
Slovenia	Budgetary procedures and public expenditure management	Sweden

Preparing the ground for agriculture

Agriculture is an important part of the European Community, accounting for a good third of the acquis that the candidates have to adopt, implement and enforce. It is a priority area for Twinning and the flexibility of the instrument is reflected in the number and diversity of the projects that make use of it.

In the **Czech Republic's** Ministry of Agriculture, Dr Deterd Goeman, former State Secretary at the German Ministry of Agriculture, coordinates a Czech-German-French Twinning. This partnership will last 28 months. It was designed to help the Czech Government to adopt and implement that part of the acquis dealing with the Common Agricultural Policy. The main aim is to provide for institutional reform and reconstruction to enable the Czech ministry to meet its obligations.

Dr Goeman's principal tasks are to propose reorganization of the Ministry of Agriculture, establish a State Agricultural Intervention Fund, its complementary Paying Agency and a Market Information System. Besides Dr Goeman's own input, the project provides for 20 missions from Short Term Experts from the French and German partners and training visits by Czech officials to governmental bodies in the Member States.

By September 2000, the Twinning had helped the Ministry to produce the draft law creating the State Agricultural Intervention Fund, which passed through the Czech Parliament to the Senate. The project had also helped establish the Payment Agency and launched training in all relevant fields.

The task has not been easy. Restructuring Ministries and national agricultural policy will always be politically sensitive. The situation has been complicated by certain administrative approaches that have emerged in transition, some of which are incompatible with the acquis in terms of structural or market policies. Nevertheless, with patience and perseverance on all sides, the challenges are being met, Dr Goeman says.

In a country like **Romania**, where agriculture is a major industry, implementing the acquis is not just important from the point of view of satisfying membership criteria; it can also help boost agricultural exports. Martial Peticlerc is PAA in a Twinning between the French Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Romanian Ministry of Agriculture's Veterinary Health Agency. The Twinning's goal is to help Romania implement the acquis in the veterinary health sector.

In **Slovakia**, Dr Karl Gese is PAA on a German-Slovak Twinning between the State of Hesse Ministry of Internal Affairs, Agriculture, Forestry and Environmental Protection and the Slovak Ministry of Agriculture. The objective is to support the implementation of Internal Market legislation and institutional strengthening in the veterinary, food and phytosanitary areas. Progress has been better in some areas than others. The phytosanitary element of the project has gone ahead smoothly, while the veterinary and food components have been slowed down by legislative problems. As Dr Gese points out, PAAs and other experts can help with technical matters, while developments at the political level are "out of our hands".

Similar Twinning projects are under way in other candidate countries, as the following (non-exhaustive) tables show.

General agricultural support and preparation for CAP

Candidate country	Project title	Member States
Bulgaria	Approximation of legislation (phytosanitary, veterinary, fisheries)	UK, Germany, Greece
Estonia	Modernisation of the agricultural sector (information system)	France, Germany, Finland
Hungary	CAP implementation, support to create fully compatible statistical information system and land information	Germany, France
Lithuania	Modernisation of rural administrative system	Denmark, Germany
Poland	Integrated administration and control system (Ministry of Agriculture)	Germany, Austria
Slovenia	Rural structural development	Germany, Austria, Greece

Market intervention agency projects

Candidate country	Project title	Member States
Czech Republic	Restructuring of the Ministry of Agriculture and Market Intervention Agency	Germany, France
Slovenia	Market intervention agency	France, Austria, Germany

SAPARD

Candidate country	Project title	Member States
Bulgaria	Improving the efficiency of SAPARD Task Force	Greece
Romania	Preparations for the implementation of SAPARD	France, UK, Germany

Cadastre and land management

Candidate country	Project title	Member States
Hungary	CAP implementation, and support to fully compatible statistical information system and land information	Germany, France
Slovenia	Modernisation of real estate management	UK, Spain

Twinning across the acquis

The bulk of Twinning projects fall within the boundaries of the five main areas of activity: the environment, public finance, EU funding, justice and home affairs and agriculture. However, the tool is flexible and can help build institutions in any area of the acquis, depending on the needs and wishes of the candidate countries.

In **Bulgaria**, for example, Jens Rasmussen, a PAA from the National Working Environment Authority in Denmark is advising the Bulgarian authorities on the measures they must take to bring their occupational safety and health provisions into line with European standards. A two-year Twinning, the project provides support and advice at three levels: the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Labour Inspectorate and the tripartite structure that is responsible for cooperation with stakeholders and social partners. In all, the project comprises 19 activities in the fields of legal development; tripartite cooperation; support to the Labour Inspectorate; training of safety representatives; and economic incentives.

By the end of October 2000 three of these activities had been completed. Two other activities had passed the point at which Member State input was generally needed, with results delivered in practice. The training activities, which run for the whole duration of the Twinning, had also begun.

The project has encountered some problem areas, many of which are essentially legal issues that become increasingly political. There has been an inevitable imbalance in cooperation, Mr Rasmussen observes, between the various Bulgarian collaborators from both the public and private sectors. He is nevertheless confident that the project will meet its targets. In all he believes that the team will have provided training to as many as 120 civil servants and 150 social partner representatives. Mr Rasmussen's Bulgarian counterpart, Peter Hadjistoikov of the Labour Inspectorate, believes that the project has resulted in a significant transfer of know-how and the introduction of new working practices.

This is just one example of Twinning in action in the field of social policy. As the following (non-exhaustive) tables illustrate, there are numerous similar projects already under way.

Occupational Safety and Health

Candidate country	Project	Member country
Czech Republic	Occupational Health and Safety	Netherlands, UK
Estonia	Support to the Estonian Occupational Health Sector	Finland, Italy
Hungary	Support for the National Public Health and Medical Officer Service	Sweden, UK

Human Resources Development

Candidate country	Project title	Member country
Lithuania	Policy development and administrative strengthening of social assistance/ensure future capacity to administer European Social Fund at central, regional and local level	UK
Poland	National vocational training system	France

Employment projects

Candidate country	Project title	Member country
Romania	Elaboration of the National Plan for Employment	Germany, Netherlands
Slovak Republic	Introduction of a standard classification of occupations/ preparation for participation in EURES (European Employment Services System)	Austria
Slovenia	Support for strengthening of labour market organisations	UK, Ireland, Sweden

Social Security Projects

Candidate country	Project title	Member country
Estonia	Institution Building for the Social Acquis (Labour Market and Social Security)	Denmark, France
Hungary	Social security of migrant workers	Netherlands, Spain
Poland	Inclusion of the Polish social security system in the Community co-ordination of social security systems of the Member States	Sweden
Romania	Development of institutional capacity at National and District Health Insurance Houses	Germany
Slovak Republic	Participation in the co-ordination of social security schemes	Spain

WHAT MAKES TWINNING WORK – AND NOT?

Does Twinning work in practice? Is it achieving its objectives? While it is still relatively new, an assessment of Twinning's progress is nonetheless important. The research summarised here indicates that things are moving in the right direction. This seems to be the view of the Twinning partners themselves, who are involved in the work on the ground. The tone, then, should be one of cautious optimism.

While Twinning is probably the best tool for many problems, it cannot help candidate countries with all their preparations for membership. What Twinning *does* offer, that no other tool can, is help in those areas that are more or less the exclusive territory of Government. A prime example is border management. There are few, if any, private sector advisers who can give candidates the advice and assistance they need. In this difficult area, winning the trust and respect of the partner depends upon understanding the special relations that exist between those who police borders. Twinning therefore answers the need in this sector, and others, for experienced advisers that inspire trust.

Room for improvement

Clearly, Twinning has room for improvement. It is, after all, only just three years old. Those in charge need to identify all the lessons and then learn from them. There is certainly a growing awareness that it is not a solution to all problems. The independent report by Member State civil servants⁵ makes a thorough analysis.

Many of the candidates are still making the painful transition from the old order to the new with very limited human and financial resources at their disposal. In one example, a Delegation describes how a project to transpose a major piece of international law into national legislation failed to achieve its aims simply because it was too ambitious. Although the project was technically excellent and led by a senior PAA, preparations had not taken sufficient account of the country's limited administrative capacity. PAAs have repeatedly underlined the need to understand the partner's administrative capabilities and problems when drafting the Covenant in order to ensure that the project is realistic.

Of course, there are other concerns, such as delays and bureaucratic complications. Some PAAs complained that they felt "orphaned" after taking up their posts. "We are always somebody else's responsibility," said one.

There are also question-marks about some areas of activity. Some candidate administrations are reluctant to commit resources to creating the necessary structures to run Special Preparatory Programmes for the management of Structural Funds when they cannot see any immediate benefit. Marie Digne, PAA on a multi-partner Special Preparatory Programme project in Hungary remarks that "even if the Structural Funds are only a distant reality for the candidates, we still have to ensure that all steps are taken to implement them. It's like trying to plant seed without having cleared the ground first."

⁵ "Report on an Assessment of the Twinning instrument under PHARE", July 2000, compiled by independent experts drawn from the Member State administrations of Germany, United Kingdom, Sweden and France.

Twinning works well – when the conditions are right

In summary, then, there are still problems to solve, but equally many signs of real progress. Perhaps it is too early to look for definitive judgements about Twinning. Projects – and the environments in which they take place – vary enormously, as any analysis shows, and very few have actually finished and handed in their final reports. Nevertheless, in the civil service experts' assessment, which was thoroughly objective, their overall appraisal was positive: "From our extensive consultations we are able to state confidently that the Twinning Instrument is a highly valued mechanism to support candidate country progress towards meeting the requirements of the acquis."

In the light of these assessments, it seems fair to say that Twinning works well when the conditions are right. The real question is why some projects work better than others, and how we can use these lessons to improve future performance.

Role of the Pre-Accession Advisor

The key success factor, according to the expert report and the collective view of Twinning partners on the ground, is the quality of the Pre-Accession Advisor.

Flexibility and willingness to adapt are clearly prerequisites in a PAA, as Norbert Sagstetter of the European Commission Delegation in Tallinn observes: "Projects work best when staffed by people who can adapt to working in different environments". PAAs have to make cultural quantum leaps to work successfully in another country's administration. However, the most important asset identified by PAAs themselves is the ability to relate to their counterparts and inspire trust as fellow professionals.

Transparency

PAAs have emphasised the importance of being transparent and admitting that their own administrations had made mistakes in the past. Mikko Ruutu in Latvia spoke for a number of PAAs when he said that: "Being honest about the failures has proved to be a good way to motivate the Latvian Border Guard. It reassures them that they are not alone in the learning process." Similarly, Carlos Sanz Mulas in Bucharest says that the breakthrough for his project came when his Romanian counterparts came to recognize that he was a "civil servant not 'an expert' and that I had come to work alongside and share in their experiences".

Support to PAAs

PAAs list a number of factors that improve their working environment and increase the chances of success. They must have support from their own administrations in their work. Often the demands of the Twinning projects, for instance for Short Term Expert input, coincide with pressure at home on normal administration duties. In these circumstances, PAAs need to have support from their own organizations so that they are not left exposed and unable to function. Another important component of a 'good' project comes into play at this juncture: the Member States' Project Leader. Successful projects often have not only a dynamic PAA, but also motivated Project Leaders – not distant figureheads who have difficulty finding time for such projects.

Equally important, the host Government must ensure that their project environment is one in which their work can take root, grow and bear fruit. This requires support at the top and intermediary levels but also a commitment to make the project work. One PAA illustrated his “good fortune” by comparison with another project where the PAA, although very well-qualified, was unable to make any progress because the local project leader (a State Secretary) took no interest in the project and gave it no support.

The crux of Twinning is that the PAAs and Short Term Experts are there to transfer know-how, not to take the burden of work off the shoulders of the candidate administration. In fact, they often increase that burden. Therefore, only if their counterparts are really committed to the process can the project be made to work. Whilst on the one hand this might seem to be a handicap, there was general consensus that in reality it was a major strength because the demands on the candidate Twins generally bred the commitment needed to meet them.

THE FUTURE OF TWINNING

The challenge now is for the Member States, the candidate countries and the Commission to work together to make Twinning more effective for reaching its objectives. Difficulties remain, as they will when an initiative is still relatively young and untested. However, early teething problems are being overcome. As Mikko Ruutu, PAA in Latvia, remarked, “the Twinning tool is being developed all the time and some of the problems we have faced can be eradicated in the future.” By clearing a path as they went, the pioneer PAAs of 1998 will have made it easier for those who follow them.

There was some initial scepticism among the candidates about the Twinning tool, but this has generally given way to increasing enthusiasm: “At the beginning there was a good deal of resistance both to the idea and to change in general. But now people are very keen to learn.” (Baltic PAA.) The view that Twinning is something “imposed from Brussels” has largely given way to recognition that it is in fact an instrument designed specifically with the candidates’ needs in mind. A tool that – as Martin Põder of the Estonian Ministry of Finance says – gives “access to Member State expertise, [and] which builds a relationship that lasts through and beyond”. PAAs say that this change has been reflected in the attitudes of the wider circle of their contacts in the field. “When I first arrived I was ‘the Irish expert’...I was seen as an outsider ...they used to joke about ‘the spy from Brussels.’” Now PAAs generally feel accepted and more welcome.

Demand for Twinning is rising, and that can only be a good sign. The 2000 Twinning round represents an increase of 50% on 1998. Despite the concerns of the independent experts that Member States might not be able to maintain the flow of expertise, Member State input has so far risen to meet the increasing demand. There is also a more even distribution of projects among the Member States. Whereas at the outset the bigger Member States pioneered the process, now increasingly the smaller Members are beginning to assume their fair share of the available projects.

The conclusions of the independent experts from Member States were upbeat: “There is no question therefore in our mind about the continuation of the Twinning as an essential instrument of the Accession process. The challenge is to improve an instrument which is accepted by all as a good idea but yet is beset by a number of practical difficulties.”

Eneko Landaburu, Director General for Enlargement at the European Commission, welcomed these remarks with a commitment to see where improvements in design of the Twinning rules could be made. The Commission has a crucial role to play. Only the Services in Brussels and its Delegations in the field can provide the global vision and quality control of what is happening across the board. Delegations must continue to monitor progress, identify challenges and help to create a receptive environment for Twinning projects and their PAAs. Member States and candidates must work to identify their synergies, to design and implement projects that really work. Twinning at its best is, after all, about teamwork.

If the Twinning Partners and the Commission focus on these and the other challenges identified, then Twinning can indeed make a significant contribution to preparing the candidate countries for accession. Which is good for the candidate countries, good for the EU as a whole, and good for the Member States who are their Twinning partners today and their colleagues tomorrow.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Member States involved in Twinning Projects (as Project Leaders or Partners)

Year		A	B	D	DK	E	FIN	F	GR	IRL	I	NL	P	S	UK
1998 Out of 103 projects	N°	19	0	57	9	9	14	40	7	5	6	11	0	9	23
	%	18.4%	0.0%	55.3%	8.7%	8.7%	13.6%	38.8%	6.8%	4.9%	5.8%	10.7%	0.0%	8.7%	22.3%
1999 Out of 125 projects	N°	15	2	38	12	16	7	35	9	3	13	19	2	28	27
	%	12.0%	1.6%	30.4%	9.6%	12.8%	5.6%	28.0%	7.2%	2.4%	10.4%	15.2%	1.6%	22.4%	21.6%
2000* Out of 143 projects	N°	8	1	39	9	35	9	32	3	3	10	12	0	16	29
	%	5.6%	0.7%	27.3%	6.3%	24.5%	6.3%	22.4%	2.1%	2.1%	7.0%	8.4%	0.0%	11.2%	20.3%
Total Out of 371 projects	N°	42	3	134	30	60	30	107	19	11	29	42	2	53	79
	%	11.4%	0.8%	36.3%	8.1%	16.2%	8.1%	29.0%	5.2%	3.0%	7.9%	11.4%	0.5%	14.4%	21.4%

* Subject to possible changes, selection not yet completed

Twinning Projects in Candidate Countries

Year		BG	CZ	EE	HU	LV	LT	PL	RO	SK	SI
1998 Out of 103 projects	N°	10	8	8	17	8	5	8	15	14	10
	%	9.7%	7.8%	7.8%	16.5%	7.8%	4.9%	7.8%	14.6%	13.6%	9.7%
1999 Out of 125 projects	N°	16	14	6	6	4	14	18	12	21	14
	%	12.8%	11.2%	4.8%	4.8%	3.2%	11.2%	14.4%	9.6%	16.8%	11.2%
2000* Out of 143 projects	N°	14	19	7	7	6	9	44	25	8	5
	%	9.8%	13.3%	4.9%	4.9%	4.2%	6.3%	30.8%	17.5%	5.6%	3.5%
Total Out of 371 projects	N°	40	41	21	30	18	28	70	52	43	29
	%	10.8%	11.1%	5.7%	8.1%	4.9%	7.6%	18.8%	14.1%	11.7%	7.9%

* Subject to possible changes

Twinning Projects per sector

	1998	1999	2000	Total
Environment & Fisheries	24	17	20	61
Transport	16	8	16	40
Structural Funds	15	1	25	41
Justice & Social Policy	0	21	10	31
Economic & Internal Market	23	33	30	86
Regional Home Affairs	25	22	26	73
Administration	0	4	2	6
Energy & Telecom	0	8	6	14
	0	11	8	19
	103	125	143	371

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

Further information on twinning is available from the Commission's dedicated website <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/pas/twinning.htm>. It contains the full manual of procedures, including the standard format for twinning covenants, as well as a real example of a recent covenant. The list of National Contact Points in Member States and Candidate Countries and the consolidated list of bodies entitled to act in lieu of public administrations is regularly updated. Finally, the report by independent experts assessing the twinning instrument (July 2000) is also available on the website.